

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Bernard Angus

Date of Interview: ?

Location of Interview: ?

Interviewer: Dorothe Norton

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: ?

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Wetland Management District in Benson, Minnesota. Office was moved to Morris, Minnesota and stayed there until retirement.

Most Important Projects: Working on the slide inventory for presentations and the landscaping around the office building.

Colleagues and Mentors: Al Radtke, Dick Toltzmann.

Most Important Issues: Didn't feel that everything should go to native prairie and native prairie plants because the objective was still waterfowl production.

Brief Summary of Interview: Talks about early life and growing up in Farmington, Minnesota and being involved with chores on the farm, FFA and 4-H. He went to college at River Falls, Wisconsin earning a broad area Agriculture degree in 1973. He first worked for the Soil Conservation Service and joined Fish and Wildlife Service in the fall of 1977. He talks about his experiences with the service, socializing with other employees, some of the training he received, issues and projects that he was involved with, high and low points, things he would have done differently and even dangerous/frightening experiences. He also discusses changes in the Fish and Wildlife Service and where he feels the Service needs to be heading.

Dorothe: ...Bernie, I'm happy I found you as easily as I did because you gave excellent directions.

Bernard: Well good, good.

Dorothe: And I'm here now to do this interview so we can send it into the National Conservation Training Center and it's be transcript in there and then it will be put into the archives.

Bernard: Okay.

Dorothe: Okay. So the first thing I'd like to know is your birthplace and date.

Bernard: Farmington, Minnesota on January 11, 1951.

Dorothe: 1951, okay and your parents' names, please.

Bernard: Ray and Frances.

Dorothe: And what was their education?

Bernard: Um.

Dorothe: And their jobs.

Bernard: Well, my dad was a farmer, he went to the eighth grade, I believe, was all, and my mother was a housewife.

Dorothe: Okay, this is (unintelligible, clock or chimes in background) and your mother was a housewife?

Bernard: Yep.

Dorothe: Okay. And where did you spend your early years?

Bernard: Well, I grew up at Farmington on a dairy farm there and graduated from high school from Farmington, went onto college at River Falls, Wisconsin and from there I started with the U.S. government in Rochester, was there for about 10 months and then onto Fergus Falls, Minnesota for another training and that was about 10 months, 11 months I guess as well. And then to a permanent location with Soil Conservation Service in Glenwood, Minnesota and worked there for about two, three years and then a position came open with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at their office located in Benson at that time. And I was selected for that position and that was with the Wetland Management District. From there the office was moved to Morris, Minnesota and then I just continued on in Morris at the Wetland Management District so my whole career was basically at that one Wetland Management District with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Dorothe: Okay, how did you spend your early years, when you were a kid?

Bernard: Oh as a kid, okay. Basically growing up on the farm, was in 4-H, showed livestock and vegetables at the county fairs and such, wasn't involved in many school activities because I kind of had to be home at the farm. Was in, you know, some class plays and such but basically all around Farmington and was in FFA as well, so.

Dorothe: And how did you spend your early years, hobbies, books or events that influenced you?

Bernard: Oh well, my dad was quite a, I guess, wildlife person. He enjoyed, especially the American Gold Finch, we had some low ground where our cattle were pastured; a creek went through that and he always remarked on how he enjoyed the gold finches through the years. He always like deer hunting but he kind of quit deer hunting because he just like to see the animals and everything so I think, probably I inherited some of that

enjoyment for the natural resources and birds and such and animals from, from my father. As far as books, I did very little reading I guess as a child and I don't do a lot of reading even today. So I guess probably most of that must have come from my father and just growing up in the farm and being outdoors and, and that type of thing, so. With 4-H I was involved, you know, with showing livestock and sort of involved with other students there and going to 4-H camps, that type of thing.

Dorothe: Did you have any jobs as a child, other than helping out on, with the farm work?

Bernard: Nope, just strictly the farm work except after I graduated from high school then I worked with the local conservation district for about three years while I was going to college; that was just a summer type job. So that's where I kind of got my start, I guess, with the government was through that local body of government anyway. But no, those were my only jobs other, you know, otherwise it was always just working on the farm.

Dorothe: Okay, did you ever hunt or fish?

Bernard: I fished with my dad, my dad loved to go fishing and I always usually got bored if they weren't biting however so, but yeah, we did quite a bit of fishing together, summer fishing and ice fishing just around the local lakes and, and there. Hunting, yes, I did pheasant hunting with my dad as well and continued pheasant hunting and deer hunting up until about; I quit the deer when I left Minnesota, that was about four or five years ago and I quit pheasant hunting about two years ago.

Dorothe: My son-in-law's pheasant hunting, he's coming back today.

Bernard: Okay.

Dorothe: Okay so, and so where did you go to high school?

Bernard: Farmington, Minnesota.

Dorothe: Okay, and when did you graduate?

Bernard: 1969.

Dorothe: Okay. And you attended the University of Wisconsin in River Falls?

Bernard: In River Falls, right.

Dorothe: And what degree did you get?

Bernard: I ended up with a broad area Agriculture degree, mainly because I figured I was going to be working for the Soil Conservation Service, which is now the National Resources Conservation Service. But I figured I was going to be working with them so I took a lot of courses, especially soil science, plant science but I also picked up some wildlife courses, landscaping and turf management and fruit production because I knew with, when I was working in Farmington for the Conservation District that there are a lot of homeowners and such, other than farmers, that some of those questions just came up in the job and so I just wanted a well rounded education and so it ended up with a broad area degree.

Dorothe: And when did you get your degree?

Bernard: In 1973.

Dorothe: Okay, and did you go on for masters or anything kind of...?

Bernard: No, I've taken a few courses since that time just to help me working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, some wildlife courses. I like to take continuing education courses; I took, you know, speech communication and—upper management type courses

as well through the University just as continuing ed credits just to help me as an individual working with other people if, if I became a supervisor some day or that type of thing but I always like to continue my, my own education.

Dorothe: Very good. Did you have any mentors or courses that especially stuck with you? You pretty much told me a little bit about what you liked.

Bernard: Not that really comes to mind, I guess, you know, there's a couple professors I guess in college that I enjoyed having them as professors just because of their enthusiasm for what they were teaching. One of those happened to be in the kind of the crop production but it was also in the landscaping and fruit production field that I believe that he was in and so I took quite a few of those courses because I enjoyed that particular instructor and the way that he, he taught.

Dorothe: Very good. Were there ever any adverse influences?

Bernard: Oh, my civil culture teacher, I didn't get along with but (laughing), that was not a good course in college but other than that no, I don't believe so. I was able to get along with most people I guess quite, quite well so I don't remember any.

Dorothe: Okay, and were you ever in the military service?

Bernard: No.

Dorothe: Okay, and you're not married so I don't have to ask you about a spouse (laughing).

Bernard: No, I have a significant other though.

Dorothe: Were, were you married before?

Bernard: No.

Dorothe: Okay, all right. So we're go to your career then, okay. See you cut it short but that's okay that means we can go out and enjoy the garden.

Bernard: Sure.

Dorothe: Okay, so when you started did you want work for the Service or did you just want to work for the government or?

Bernard: I had no idea when I going to college where I would actually end up. I guess, you know, I did figure I was probably, would get on with the Soil Conservation Service because I started with soil conservation district right out of high school. I kind of enjoyed that work. I enjoyed being outside...

Dorothe: That was your first government job?

Bernard: Yeah.

Dorothe: (Unintelligible) Soil Conservation.

Bernard: Yeah, that was, yeah well it was a county job so it was a local unit of government...

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: ...prior to graduation from college but I just enjoyed working with the public and I enjoyed working with the farmers and that so I kind of figured that, you know, that was probably where I would end up but I, I don't think I knew for sure until after my junior year and I was; each year I guess I interviewed at the college when they had career day, they would have, you know, individuals come over and the soil scientists for the Soil

Conservation Service, I knew him quite well because he would be down to the office in Farmington, the conservation district there. And so I knew him through the years and I guess I always interviewed with him each year and then after my junior year interviewing with him that spring he said, "Well if you want to get on with the Soil Conservation Service you have to come on as a trainee before you graduate from college." It's the only way I would be able to get on, so I did then apply for their internship program and got on. I guess I could have, in my earlier years too as a freshman or whatever; I didn't because the training locations were not close to Farmington and at that time I needed to kind of helped out on the farm as well. Plus I was making more money working for the conservation district then I would of as an internship and so that's why I did not come on as an intern but then after my junior year I did intern with them and that was; ended up closer to the cities, it was about 40 minutes from home and so that worked out as well. And then I was able to get on with Fish or with Soil Conservation Service Center cuz they guaranteed me a job.

Dorothe: What did you do while you were in that position?

Bernard: Basically I was just kind of, I suppose a gofer person. Prior to the intern, when I was on the internship I guess I started receiving a little bit more training but it was still working with the district conservationist and the district technician. I would be running, holding the survey rod when they did elevation surveys, helping laying out; at that time we were draining wetlands and I guess even then I kind of thought this shouldn't be happening. I just, just a personal feeling I guess but that was what the job was at that time, in the '60's was, you know, to drain wetlands and that type of thing so I actually was out there laying out tie line and helping with the surveying. Made up folders, what they called conservation plans for individual landowners. I did kind of the picking up the soils map and coloring in the soils, which was sort of elementary in a way but it's still, was very important for the plan in helping the landowner understand which soils were their better soils and their poorer soils and what the uses would be of those soils. So that was kind of that particular training then as in the internship, I did have to do a project as such and I worked on a plan for the lake of Waconia or Waconia Lake too; public use at

that time even back in the early 70's, public use was becoming quite high and so it just kind of developing a plan that there might be time zones when either speed boats might be—yeah better use on the lake versus fishing and some things like that in certain areas where maybe this would be a better area for a beach and that type of thing and so that's what my special project was.

Dorothe: And when did you start then with Fish and Wildlife Service?

Bernard: It would have been in the fall of 1977, I believe it was...

Dorothe: And that was in what, Wilmer, did you say?

Bernard: That was in Benson.

Dorothe: Benson.

Bernard: The office was in Benson.

Dorothe: Okay. And then they moved eventually to Morris.

Bernard: Yep, they eventually moved to Morris.

Dorothe: And what attracted you to, to the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Bernard: I guess I was starting to get a little frustrated with Soil Conservation Service because they were what I felt getting to be paper plans. They were more interested in numbers then they were what actually was happening out in the field and I was, I was just becoming frustrated with that, that it just; I didn't see should be the vision that they were going for and so I was a little bit frustrated. I knew the wetland manager, wetland manager at Benson because I was preparing soils information for them when they purchased land they needed to know, kind of, what the soil type was that type of thing.

So I, I knew them, I was preparing plans for them. Then this wetland manager approached me one day and said, "You know we've got this land, some of it was formal ag land, crop land, as such. We need to get it back to some type of a nesting cover; none of us have the experience or the education, you know, for that background 'cuz they're all wildlife people." He asked my suggestion as to how to prepare a job description for the position that they were thinking of creating and I said, "Well, basically, it sounds like you need someone from the soil conservation service because our training and background is in soils and plant science." Which, basically, is what they were sort of looking at. So I believe they took a lot of the information from the job that Soil Conservation Service description had for this new position. He asked if I, you know, would be interested in applying for it and I said, "Well, I'm not sure, I guess." I was fairly young, I wasn't married; part of this was, I think, they had special funding through the Bi-Centennial Land Heritage Program. And this job was being created from that, that was a five-year program and I figured that at the end of five years I kind of know how the government works; I figured, you know, the job would be gone where would I be at that time, so I was a little hesitant but in the end I thought, okay, I am single, I do like wildlife, I thought it might be a really good switch and so I applied for it and I was selected for it and I do not regret it ever since, so.

Dorothe: And who was the supervisor at that time?

Bernard: At that time, Dick Toltzmann was the supervisor that I talked to.

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: But prior to me applying, Al Radtke then was selected as the wetland manager and Al Radtke was actually the one that interviewed and the one that actually selected me.

Dorothe: Oh, very good, okay.

Bernard: So.

Dorothe: And so where, what was the pay and benefits like at that time?

Bernard: Oh boy, can I remember back. Seems like the pay was maybe like 8,000 a year; benefits I felt were good because there were health benefits, the vacation time I felt, thought, was quite good. The working hours as such, I mean, it was basically an 8 to 4:30 but it was quite flexible, probably more with maybe the individual supervisor I had. If you wanted to take a half a day for some reason of, your vacation time, as long as it wasn't affecting some urgent work, you know, I was able to do that. So that was a very good plus as far as a job, too.

Dorothe: Were there promotion opportunities for you as you've (unintelligible) on?

Bernard: The position was advertised as a 7/9 I believe, no, a 9/11. It was advertised as a 9/11; I was a GS 9 where I was at and I guess when I transferred over I said I would not take anything less than what I was at to where I was so I basically I think it was basically a lateral transfer; within a year then I was promoted to the GS 11. Beyond that, it was probably somewhat limited for me because, at least with Fish and Wildlife Service, because I did not have enough credits at that time to qualify for a manager's position because I didn't have enough of the wildlife courses. I did take more courses for that particular reason that in case my job ended that maybe I would be able to qualify for some managerial positions so I was kind of looking ahead for myself, never really had to do that; I was quite satisfied with the position and so it just stayed at an 11. There was a gripe later on that I was a little frustrated with, with some promotions that happened later but that's beside the point at this time, I guess.

Dorothe: Did you socialize with the people you worked with?

Bernard: Yes, we did quite a bit. Most of them, of course, were hunters that probably got me into hunting a little bit more as I was a person that never liked to actually kill

anything or shoot anything and that's probably why I was never a good shot. Although once I finally got a dog that was actually a hunting dog, it kind of gave me a little bit different perspective. I enjoyed going out with my hunting dog, more so just by myself, but that gave me a little bit more perspective, I guess, on the hunting that it was, it just changed it a little bit but no we would have two or three of us from the office would go, basically pheasant hunting, we would do trap hunting. Beyond that there probably was not a lot of socializing although the assistant manager quite often brought his children up to my place when I lived by Cyrus 'cuz I did live in the country. And it was kind of good for his kids just to kind of get out and run around and that type of thing so, so there was some socializing with the group, yeah.

Dorothe: Did you have any recreation in the field when you were working?

Bernard: Recreation as...?

Dorothe: Like bowling leagues or ball games or...?

Bernard: Oh, well actually, yeah, we did have a bowling league in Benson that actually was comprised of the wetland office so there were five of us that were on a bowling team, yeah. I did bowl in Morris too after I was up there and on a league there, that was not with Fish and Wildlife Service people though. I was on a recreation minded I guess. I do a lot of horse back riding, I got into tennis leagues, in Morris I played singles, men's doubles and mixed doubles so I played a lot of tennis, played a few tournaments. Then eventually I got into starting volleyballs leagues, men's leagues and coed league in Morris as well, went to a lot of tournaments in volleyball. And I'm still playing volleyball yet today, so.

Dorothe: Well, that's good, okay. And why did you leave the Service, you said you took an early out?

Bernard: I took the early retirement because I wanted to move to be with a significant other.

Dorothe: Oh.

Bernard: That was, I was only an hour away except that I just felt that was too long to commute for another; I think I had to have gone another nine years or so. And I just felt that was an hour each way, two hours a day commuting was just not what I wanted to do so I elected then to take the early out.

Dorothe: So when you retired what was your title and your grade, you said a GS 11?

Bernard: I was a, I was still a soil conservationist GS 11.

Dorothe: Okay, soil conservationist.

Bernard: Yes, soil conservationist/range conservationist.

Dorothe: Well, what kind of training did you receive for your job?

Bernard: The first early years they sent me to, first was just kind of an introductory training out at Beckley, West Virginia introducing basically a lot of the Washington staff people and kind of just understanding how the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service operated. I also went to—prairie, native prairie workshops such that were held in Minnesota, one in Iowa because I was working with native habitat as well, native prairie. Prescribed burning; there were several different training courses there to get me qualified and understand fire and working with fire and eventually becoming a fire boss on the station. So I guess probably the fire and native prairie workshops and training, several different courses there.

Dorothe: And what were your day-to-day duties, working with others or?

Bernard: Basically was working with the staff people but probably evaluating and coming up with a plan for each waterfowl production area, those areas, you know, varied in size from 40 acres to up to I think our largest one was around 1500 acres. But taking into consideration the different kinds of wetlands that were on those WPA's but I decided or determined which different fields should...

(Phone ringing)

Dorothe: Should you answer your phone?

Bernard: If you want to shut...

(Break in tape)

Dorothe: Okay, now we can go on.

Bernard: I determined what fields as such should go to what we call a DNC mixture...(phone ringing). You probably want to shut if off 'cuz the phone's going...

(Break in tape)

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: So I would determine, we were talking about den's nesting cover, DNC, that was what researchers were telling us that, that type of cover produced a lot of waterfowl. So we, I was looking at okay what type of grasses and legumes could I plant on these particular areas to provide a good nesting cover. So I would determine the mixture of legumes and grasses or maybe it was strictly legumes or maybe strictly grasses. I determined the mixture, determined how the area would be prepared, the seed bed preparation, the timing of when any herbicide would be applied, when it would be seeded

and then also any cultural practices or mechanical practices that needed to be taken care of for weed control and such afterwards to make sure that this area got seeded into a good nesting cover and also the longevity of that cover. Another one that we were working on also then was putting in a lot of the native grasses that were here a hundred years ago, native to Minnesota, western Minnesota because these particular native grasses, once they were established with proper management, would never have to be replanted again and so that was our ideal cover that we were going for was with using native prairie plants. It has evolved a little bit since that. First we were planting the grasses because researchers again were telling us the taller, the denser it was, the better it was for waterfowl nesting. Through the years I think that idea changed that we were getting it too thick and too dense, maybe it was lacking some elements. So we started putting in more of the native prairie flowers and such into the mixture as well to introduce insects because that was also kind of important for waterfowl for nesting also an early green up so there was lots of different factors that had to be taken into consideration. So through the training I received, working with the researchers, I took all that information, each particularity waterfowl production area, I would do a plan for as to okay this particular field would get seeded at a certain type, time of year, get seeded to a certain type of mixture, when it was seeded and all that and worked with the assistant manager who then worked with the maintenance crew because the maintenance people were then the ones who actually did the planting or working of the soil or anything like that. So working with the rest of the staff in developing, you know, that plan and implementing that plan. I also, you know, the management of the unit said it was prescribed burning, we used (unintelligible) we used grazing also to manage the particular different types of cover and each type of cover would maybe require a different type of management practice whether it be fire or and then also the time of the year that the fire would be done to best manage that habitat to make it more vigorous and productive for future years. So that was the bulk of it. I also did presentations to school groups whether they're elementary, high school, 4-H groups, FFA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts that type of thing as well.

Dorothe: What tools and instruments did you use?

Bernard: Well, one of things was, I would use a soil probe to kind of give me an idea of, you know, we had the soil map to go by, that's probably what I used the most was the soil map but I would do, occasionally, do some soil probing just to see what the soil actually was. Other tools, I did some what we call the bell pole readings; this was a type of practice developed by an individual to determine how dense the cover was in the spring when migratory waterfowl returned so there was actually about a 2 x 2 foot pole that's about six feet high with decimeters marked on it. And we'd actually go out and, and measure a field as such and determine an average density of the cover and that density was where the pole, the residue material totally blocked out the pole, it just, kind of come up with an average of the density of the material that was there to see which; how dense the field was with returning waterfowl, what they seemed to prefer. So I would use some of that or that particular instrument for determining that. As far as other instruments and things—other than the camera, I used the camera a lot for just photographing, you know, accomplishments that type of thing so I did a lot of photography and a lot of documentation using the camera, slides and for slide presentations and that type of thing. So that was kind of the bulk of the equipment that you use.

Dorothe: Did you every witness any new Service, Service inventions or innervations?

Bernard: Not that comes to mind, offhand.

Dorothe: Okay. And did you work with animals?

Bernard: Not very much, the only animals would be, you know, waterfowl but just in seeing them out there, I mean, I would do some breeding pair counts in the spring to just get an idea of what and numbers, the kind of numbers of waterfowl that were out there. But other than that, a little bit with the grazing, yes, because I would determine how many animal unit months and that would be, you know, an individual and most cases these were beef cows, a cow and a calf. To graze an area down, I wanted to graze it down almost to the ground taking all the litter that was there, I had to determine how

many cows and calves for basically a 30-day period I needed on that particular field in order to achieve grazing that down so in that respect I was working with livestock and then I was working with local farmers or something like that, that had beef cattle. So that was probably the only livestock correlation that there would have been.

Dorothe: How did you feel towards the animals?

Bernard: I enjoyed it because I like livestock, I like animals and so that was kind of a fun alternative, management alternative was to use the livestock so and then that also got me working with adjoining farmers and landowners too, so that was kind of fun.

Dorothe: What kind of support did you receive locally, regionally and federally of the type of work you were doing?

Bernard: Locally, received a lot from county commissioners, just local people that through the education of what we were doing, they were able to understand what we were doing so the support was, was fairly good although the support for purchasing more land by the county commissioners was probably not good because they felt that we were taking ag land out of production. But otherwise, no, the support was quite good as far as the regional office. They were aware to a point of what we were doing out there maybe not the extent that they do on refuges because the refuges, you know, kind of—

(unintelligible) continuous unit where the waterfowl production area were not. They were scattered here and there and so it was a little bit harder to see if you were doing some type of management on those and accomplishments, it was a little bit harder to see then if it was strictly on a refuge, so. As far as the national level, I'm sure we were recognized but I don't know if it was this, any significant amount.

Dorothe: Okay. How do you think the Service was perceived by people outside the agency?

Bernard: As far as the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wetland Management District, local landowners I don't think liked them real well because in the early years there were a lot of weed problems, not just weed problems, on these federal areas. And local farmers were required to take care of their noxious weeds and the manager that was there at that time, prior to me coming, said "No, because we're a federal unit, we do not have to abide by state laws." And so there was a lot of animosity that was created in those early years. As time went on some of that, in working with the local weed inspectors and township supervisors and such, I think we were finally able to tame some of that down because we did start to do more weed control. As far as the other general public, hunters certainly like; perceived the wetland office as a good thing to have. The local people did as well because they felt it did bring some economy into the area. It's also the educational programs that we provided to people, to the schools and such, I think was definitely well received and needed. So generally the public receive, I think, the government agency quite well except some of the local farmers probably did not.

Dorothe: What projects were you involved in?

Bernard: Projects, well one of them was—in order to do these presentations to school groups a lot of times we used slides. Our inventory of slides was quite poor and so I kind of inventoried what we needed for slides to give these presentations and I just made a point to go out and get those photographs or, and get them on slides so that whoever was on the staff; basically I pulled a lot of the staff members and asked "Okay in presentations, what do you feel you need in slides to, to give a good presentation?" And so with that inventory of what they needed I went out and, and got those slides so we created a very good—number of slides that were available for the individuals to choose from and that was a pretty good project because there's well over thousands of slides now that are in a cabinet over in that office that all labeled according to categories which I had set up and so there all labeled and they can go through and then pick them out and they're, they're numbered in such so that when they're done then they go back to that spot in the cabinets, so that was probably one of the big projects that I, I worked on. Another one was just a landscaping project around the wetland office. Initially when the

office was built I think one of the, I'm not sure what the title would have been of, of the people in the regional office that kind of did the landscaping. We didn't feel it really fit for the area out there, it was, you just kind of had this building sitting there and there really wasn't a lot around it and so I kind of developed a plan that was basically landscaping for wildlife. I was using plant material that local homeowners could also use that would help attract birds and butterflies and such to their home yards and so we kind of developed that in to; to have around the office that would make the office more appealing but then also could be utilized for giving presentations or talks to people or if they wanted to come out and see what a particular plant looked like that would help attract birds and such into their own yard. So that was another project, I guess, that I worked on. There probably was a couple right now they don't come to mind.

Dorothe: Were there major issues that you had to deal with, if so, what were they?

Bernard: Issues—not too many issues, I guess, until my latter years, I guess, before I retired. Kind of the thought process was that everything should go to native prairie and native prairie plants. I did not agree with that philosophy because if the, the main objective was still waterfowl production, I don't know if strictly native prairie grasses and plants would have achieved that objective. So I—that was kind of a controversy I guess and before I left I didn't have, I was not required to everything should go to that so I don't know where they're at, at this point now, but I think now everything, supposedly, has to go to Minnesota native, native plant material.

Dorothe: What was the major impediment to your job?

Bernard: Some years maybe not enough money to accomplish what we needed to be accomplished, that seemed to vary from year to year and it made it difficult to plan, other than the first five years under the Bi-centennial Land Heritage Land Program. Those first five years we kind of knew how much money we were going to have for those five years, after that it just kind of varied from year to year and so it made it very difficult to try and plan ahead, say three years, because in order to get a good seed bed preparation to plant

legumes or grasses or whatever it would be, you have to have a good seed bed prep and sometimes that required three years of preparation. Well if; the seed bed was now ready in three years and that year came up and we didn't have the money to buy the seed to put it in the ground then what do we do with that, we either farm it back out again or something like so it made kind of planning to make things flow well through the years, not knowing from year to year exactly how much money we're going to have, made that very difficult. So that was probably, probably the major thing.

Dorothe: Okay, and so Al Radtke was your first supervisor.

Bernard: Yep, my sup, my first and only supervisor.

Dorothe: Oh, the only supervisor.

Bernard: Yep.

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: Yep. He and I basically started the same year and we both retired the same year.

Dorothe: Oh okay. I, I think I met him once but I don't know yet I...

Bernard: Probably, I'm sure you have.

Dorothe: ...I won't know until I see him.

Bernard: Yeah, I'm sure you have.

Dorothe: Okay, who were the individuals who shaped your career?

Bernard: I would say Al Radtke was probably the major one that really help shaped my career; probably Richard Toltzmann to some degree. Those two, Al Radtke would have been the major one.

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: Those two are the ones that first come to mind.

Dorothe: Who were some of the people you knew, not in the Service, and would they be able to work for the Service today?

Bernard: Mmmm, well there was other individuals I knew that worked for the Soil Conservation Service that when I, after I had transferred over to Fish and Wildlife and told them what I was doing, they said "Well let us know if there's any other positions like that, that open up." Because I mean, I thoroughly enjoyed the job that I had, I think it was the best job on the station because I basically kind of had my own program, I certainly had to work with Al on the goals of the district and such but once I knew what those were I could kind of just kind of go and do my own thing. And working with the public, being outside I mean that just super so there were others after they saw kind of what my job was, that certainly would like to have like that particular job. So there be a few others that were probably in another government agency that and some that could have easily transferred over and, for that.

Dorothe: So what Presidents, Secretary of the Interior and Directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service did you serve under?

Bernard: (Chuckling)

Dorothe: See how good your memory is.

Bernard: (Chuckling) That's, no that's, now you're really testing my memory because I'm probably not going to remember many of them.

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: I guess Watt was one.

Dorothe: James Watt.

Bernard: Yep. Sorry nobody else comes to mind at this point.

Dorothe: Okay. How about who was President?

Bernard: Well, there would have been Richard Nixon, I guess, probably Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter...

Dorothe: (Softly saying) That's okay.

Bernard: That's right now all that.

Dorothe: Did you think the changes in the different administrations affected our work?

Bernard: Yes—well it affected the work probably because of the money that we received. I think through some administration certainly we received better appropriations and were able then to accomplish a lot more. So depending on which administration I guess was probably in, that definitely affected all the work. I'm sure individuals yes, as far as regional directors, I'm sure some were better than others in working with higher government officials in obtaining funds and that type of thing and how effective they were.

Dorothe: In your opinion, who were the individuals who shaped the Service?

Bernard: Oh wow—probably some of that goes back to when some of the first refuges were established and right now I'm not going to be able to give you names because I am not a, I hate history and I am not good at remembering names.

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: So I, the only thing I guess I can say is probably some of the first early refuge people—managers and then when the first refuge system and I don't know if that was Hoover that may have established one of the refuges, I'm not sure.

Dorothe: It will be one hundred years in March, Pelican Island...

Bernard: Okay.

Dorothe: ...National Wildlife...

Bernard: Okay.

Dorothe: Refuge in Florida.

Bernard: Yeah, okay.

Dorothe: That's, by the way, where the meeting will be for all Fish and Wildlife Service retirees.

Bernard: Oh, okay.

Dorothe: So I can give you some information about when we're done if you like...

Bernard: Okay.

Dorothe: ...think you might want to attend.

Bernard: Sure.

Dorothe: So what was the high point of your career?

Bernard: High point, wow. Personally I guess, probably getting a few special achievement awards through my supervisor that totally I wasn't expecting. I think those were a couple highlights. Developing this photo system and getting all the photographs I think was definitely a highlight. Our, each year, each individual refuge would put together a, and now I can't think of what it's titled but sort of a summary of what they did for the year and we included a lot of photographs and a lot of comments came back, these summaries of such traveled all; each individual refuge throughout the United States and sometimes you wouldn't get them back for five, six years or more before they'd finally end up back at your station. But in getting some of those, annual report I guess is what it was called, getting, seeing some of the comments that individuals made of some of the photography that I did and some of the work that I accomplished, I think was, was some highlights.

Dorothe: Okay. What was the low point of your career?

Bernard: Low point, hmmm having to retire, I guess, or when I decided to retire.

Dorothe: What do you wish you'd done differently?

Bernard: Mmm.

Dorothe: Kept on working?

Bernard: Yeah, probably, I mean it would have been nice to have kept on working, yeah ‘cuz I thoroughly enjoyed the job that I had but I, I needed to make a move for personal reasons and so the two wouldn’t work out together I guess.

Dorothe: Okay. What was the most dangerous or frightening experience you ever had?

Bernard: (Chuckling) Umm—had a piece of equipment that we used on one of our fire—things roll over. It, you know, nothing serious; the machine was damaged a little bit from some of the fire but nothing too serious, was one example. Another time I had on my fire crew, that was probably one of the earlier years when I was fire boss, that I gave what I thought was specific instructions to an individual. He didn’t implement them the way that I wanted them to be implemented and this individual ended up being in smoke for heavy smoke, for probably a good half hour and I had no radio contact ‘cuz we didn’t have that type of equipment at that time and so I was very concerned this individual was going to be able to come out and finally I saw them come through the smoke and that was quite a relief but that was probably the scariest experience that I had was not being able to get in contact with them and know where they were at, so. And that was, certainly helped me for future years. I talked to the other individuals about it; they understood what I wanted that individual to do; he just did it in the opposite way that I wanted it done so.

(End side one, start side two)

Bernard: But yeah that was probably the most frightening because it, it could’ve, you know, affected someone’s life.

Dorothe: What was your most humorous experience?

Bernard: Humorous (chuckling) I think...

Dorothe: We’ve all had those.

Bernard: I think falling down once when I was taking a photograph, I was trying to photograph a nest of some type of song bird and it was on a slope or something and I was just kind of getting down and my lower foot and I just kind of ended up rolling and tumbling and to me that was just kind of funny I guess, so.

Dorothe: Well luckily you didn't get any physical harm.

Bernard: Nope, nope, no physical harm so and didn't damage the young in the nest or anything like that either, so.

Dorothe: And what do you like to tell others about your career in the Service?

Bernard: I guess that for me it was a tremendous 20 years, I guess, that I worked for Fish and Wildlife Service just because of the accomplishments that I was able to get done. Working with the public, I enjoyed working with public people, working with the public and so just all of that, I guess, was just really satisfying for me as an individual.

Dorothe: What were some of the changes that you observed in the Fish and Wildlife Service like in the personnel or the environment?

Bernard: Personnel—I mean you had to work with changes because we received different regional directors, some of them I think were more understanding of what our program was and what our needs were than others. So having to, you know, kind of go with that flow of individuals—can you repeat the question again?

Dorothe: What were some of the changes you observed in the Service...

Bernard: Oh, okay.

Dorothe: ...in personnel and the environment?

Bernard: All right. Well, as far as the environment, I saw more of our natural resources being depleted and disappearing. One thing that maybe isn't quite the same but in my particular position from one I first started to when I ended, the paperwork just in the end was just so insurmountable; I mean, it was just unbelievable from when I first started; I think when I first started I was probably in the field 80% of the time and by the time I retired it seemed like I was only able to get out 20% of the time just because there was more paperwork and, and that type of thing. Maybe more of that was working with more people because they understood what we were doing, maybe they understood more of what my education was and how I could help them too so it was a lot more personnel calls and things to work with people so that was probably a good point. But it maybe took me away more from working directly with the resource and the management end of it.

Dorothe: Well, we're almost getting to the end here.

Bernard: Okay.

Dorothe: What are your thoughts on the future?

Bernard: Um.

Dorothe: As far as Fish and Wildlife?

Bernard: Myself or Fish and Wildlife?

Dorothe: Fish and Wildlife.

Bernard: Fish and Wildlife Service. I think it certainly needs to be out there, I think they have to maybe take a little bit, especially with the wetland districts, I think they have to take a more wider look at who the people are that are using the waterfowl production

areas; I don't think that it is strictly the duck hunter anymore. There is a pheasant hunter but there is the general recreational user now that wants to go out for a hike or that wants to go out horseback riding or wants to go out doing photography. I think they have to look at a wider range of, of the people now than strictly just waterfowl hunters.

Dorothe: Where do you see the Service heading in the next decade?

Bernard: I think they're going to have to—do a lot more people management as far as the public use because private use areas and wildlife lands as such, the natural resources are being depleted; more and more people are going to have to go to public lands and so I think the use on those public lands is going to have to become more regulated, which is kind of sad but I think it's going to have to come to that so that the public lands are not deteriorated; I think that we're going to see more and more in the future that, that's going to have to be taken into consideration. I think we're already seeing that on some of the larger state parks and such that I think they're starting to close gates after so many people are in because, and I think that's going to happen with a lot of all the public lands; I think that's something that they're going to have to take a look at as well.

Dorothe: Good. Do you have any photographs or documents that you care to donate or share with, for the archives? If you do, it's okay and if you don't, it's okay, too.

Bernard: The only thing would be my personal special achievement awards that probably I'm not; no longer have a need for but I don't, can't see why they would want those, so (chuckling).

Dorothe: Okay.

Bernard: I'm not aware of anything right now.

Dorothe: Who else do you think we should interview? You know the ones I'm going to do now.

Bernard: Right, right.

Dorothe: Do you have anybody else that you think that we should interview and not forget about? I marked down Dick Toltzman because I know him.

Bernard: Oh sure.

Dorothe: And if I can get over to Wisconsin, I would like to do him.

Bernard: I think Dick...

Dorothe: But he goes to Arizona for the winters, so.

Bernard: Yeah, okay.

Dorothe: I think Dick would be a very good one.

Bernard: Um—Al Radtke might have somebody as far as locally that he's thinking, I mean there's some people that I worked with at the University that...

Dorothe: But they didn't work for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Bernard: They didn't work for the Fish and Wildlife, no. As far as other Fish and Wildlife staff people—right now nobody comes to mind, I guess.

Dorothe: Okay. Well, that concludes our interview.

Bernard: Okay.

Dorothe: And I want to thank you, Bernie...

Bernard: You're welcome.

Dorothe: ...very much for having this time available. Thank you.